

## CARBS “TO GO”: Tips for the Traveling Athlete

Athletes who travel have an added challenge -- finding adequate carbohydrate-rich meals and snacks in restaurants, delis and quick food service places. Although a high carbohydrate sports diet is important both during training and before competing, all too often traveling athletes succumb to convenience and dine on whatever happens to be easiest at that moment. This commonly results in a high fat diet of donuts, burgers, french fries, chips and other greasy foods. Although you may rationalize that you “deserve” this convenient treat (you’re tired, hungry, stressed, anxious, lonely, bored, or any combination of these), you may also compromise your performance.

The *occasional* high fat meal is unlikely to interfere with top training, but a steady fast food diet can take its toll. To help you better accommodate a high carbohydrate sports diet into your traveling routine, here are a few tips for eating on the road. One basic tip: Make the effort to eat a hearty, high carbohydrate breakfast on travel days. This prevents you from getting *too* hungry (at which point you care less about what you eat) and invests in your ability to wisely plan for and choose wholesome carbohydrate-rich foods the rest of the day.

**Breakfast:** 1. At a restaurant, order pancakes, french toast, whole wheat toast, bagels, bran or corn muffins. Add jelly, jam or syrup for extra carbohydrates but either “hold the butter” or request that it be served on the side.  
2. Order a *large* juice (preferably orange or tomato) for vitamin C and potassium. This can help compensate for a potential lack of fruits or vegetables in the other meals.  
3. At a hotel, you can save time and money by packing along your own cereal, raisins and spoon. (A water glass can double as a cereal bowl.) Either bring powdered milk, or buy a half-pint of lowfat milk at a local store.

**Lunch:** 1. Find a deli or restaurant that offers wholesome breads and request a sandwich that emphasizes the bread rather than the filling. “Hold the mayo” and instead use mustard, ketchup, sliced tomatoes and/or lettuce for moistness. Add more carbohydrates with juice and yogurt, fruit or fig newtons (brought from home) for dessert.  
2. At fast food restaurants, choose baked potatoes, chili, thick-crust pizza or the salad bar since the burgers, fried fish and french fries have a very high fat content. Request extra bread or rolls.  
3. At a salad bar, generously pile on the chick peas, three-bean salad, toasted croutons. Fill-up on breads and rolls instead of “fat-loading” on salad dressings and mayonnaise-smothered pasta and potato salads.  
4. Baked potatoes are a super choice if you request them plain rather than drenched with butter, sour cream and cheese toppings. For moistness, try mashing the potato with milk (special request) rather than butter. Be aware that specialty potatoes, such as Wendy’s cheese-stuffed potato, may contain 9 teaspoons of fat.  
5. Hearty soups (such as split pea, minestrone, lentil, barley, noodle) accompanied by crackers, bread, plain bagel, english muffin or corn muffin provide a satisfying lunch that is rich in carbs and low in fat.  
6. Although both soft drinks and juices are good sources of carbohydrates, fruit juices are nutritionally preferable.

**Dinner:** 1. Patronize restaurants that offer wholesome carbohydrates (pasta, baked potatoes, rice, steamed vegetables, salad bars, homemade breads, fruit, juice), as well as broiled foods and other low fat entrees.  
2. Request *thick-crust* pizza with vegetable toppings rather than thin-crust pizza with pepperoni or sausage.  
3. Enjoy bread and rolls either plain or with jelly (special request). Replace the butter-calories with another slice of bread, a second potato, soup and crackers, juice or sherbert -- all carbohydrate-rich choices.  
4. When ordering salads, always request the dressing be served “on the side”. Otherwise, you can get as many as 400 calories of oil or mayonnaise -- fats that fill your stomach but leave your muscles unfueled.

**Snacks and munchies:** 1. Pack your own goodie grab bag. Some suggestions include: whole grain bagels, muffins, rolls, crackers, pretzels, fig newtons, oatmeal raisin cookies, granola, raisins, dried or fresh fruit.  
2. Buy wholesome snacks at the convenience store: small packets of trail mix, raisins or dried fruit, yogurt, V-8 juice or fruit juice, a hot pretzel, slice of pizza or even a small sandwich, cup of soup or hot cocoa.

**In airplanes:** 1. Be sure to drink plenty of fluids. You can very easily become dehydrated due to the low humidity in the cabin. Water, juices and non-caffeinated beverages are the best choices because coffee, tea and alcohol have a diuretic (dehydrating) effect. Request two beverages per serving or bring along your own water bottle.  
2. To safe-guard against irregular meal times and/or inadequate meals, pack along a sandwich or wholesome snack for “emergency food”. If desired, pre-order special meals (i.e., vegetarian, low cholesterol).  
3. To limit jetlag, set your watch to the destination time and eat according to that time schedule. Drink lots of fluids, but avoid caffeine and alcohol.